

**Peripheral Vision:  
A Novel**

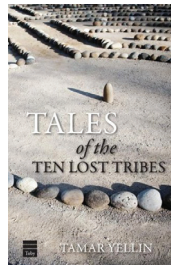
**Patricia Ferguson**  
Other Press, Hardcover  
\$24.95 (376pp)  
978-1-59051-287-6

A mother's love is never a sure thing. Neither, for that matter, is that of a spouse or child. As precarious as good fortune, such relationships can turn on a dime; or, as is the case with Ferguson's petulant characters, with a wayward glance. Words left unspoken, gestures left open to interpretation, emotions kept tightly under control: these are the subtleties upon which Britain's Somerset Maugham Award-winning author spins an intricately structured tale of disparate lives, of people who have nothing in common on the face of things yet are bound by their demands for love and acceptance.

Beginning with Sylvia, a successful eye surgeon and new mother who despairs over her lack of maternal feelings for her infant daughter, Ferguson astutely reveals the labyrinthine nature of parent-child relationships. In stark contrast to Sylvia's maternal reserve, her best friend Will, an unemployed actor, is excessively dutiful in caring for his dying mother, even to the point of compromising his own health. Then there are Ruby and George: she, an aloof and taciturn working class mother whose neglect causes her achingly self-reliant son to suffer a life-altering injury. And lastly, the idealistic young Iris and Rob. Their relationship is undermined by the insidious influence of Rob's mother and by Iris's perverse method of coping with the tragic circumstances of her own mother's death.

Not only does Ferguson adroitly juggle seemingly divergent stories of incongruous characters, she also travels through time, from the mid-'90s to the mid-'50s, to provide context and motivation for their actions and emotions. It's a lot to keep in the air, but Ferguson pulls it off effortlessly, through crisp dialogue, trenchant observations, and crystalline details that coalesce into an indelible whole. Although her coincidence-laden conclusion may be too neat by half, even this succeeds due to its understated simplicity.

Longlisted for Britain's Orange Prize, Ferguson's fifth novel finally introduces her to the U.S. market, where she will deservedly compete for fans of Elizabeth Berg, Sue Miller, and Anita Shreve. A trained nurse and midwife—aspects of the medical profession that emphasize caring and devotion—Ferguson's empathy for human suffering, both physical and psychological, is palpable yet controlled. Readers looking for a “sure thing” would be wise to cast their sights on this emerging British novelist. (October) *Carol Haggas*



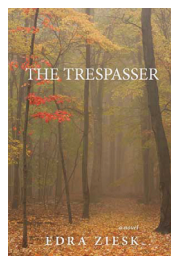
**Tales of the Ten  
Lost Tribes**

**Tamar Yellin**  
The Toby Press,  
Hardcover \$22.95 (160pp)  
978-1-59264-213-7

Tamar Yellin is an award-winning author of such books as *Genizah at the House of Sheper* and the short story collection, *Kafka in Brontëland and other Stories*. Her latest novel, *Tales of the Ten Lost Tribes*, takes its name from the myth of the ten tribes of Israel who were banished by the Assyrians, then lost in time. The ten chapter titles come directly from the names of the ten tribes: Reuben, Simeon, Dan, etc. Each chapter is a chronological telling of the life of Yellin's nameless narrator and protagonist. These chapters are so self-contained that they could easily stand as independent short stories. Some have appeared previously in periodicals including *Nomonym Magazine* and *Zeek Magazine*.

The myth of the Ten Tribes of Israel, specifically the concept of being lost, is a theme that runs throughout Yellin's novel. In essence, the author has taken the macroscopic totality of the Jewish Diaspora and exilic experience and has reverted it to the microcosm of a novel. Yellin writes, “But from the stream of people, I sought out those who, for the purposes of kind research, I chose to identify among the lost: that hidden tribe of wanderers and strangers, aliens and misfits, to which I too belonged.”

Yellin's nameless character is “lost” from the very beginning, yet nuances of humor breathe beneath the surfaces of Yellin's tight, exquisite prose like the shorter works of Isaac B. Singer and his novel, *Gimpel the Fool*. *Tales of the Ten Lost Tribes* sings like John Updike's first novel *The Poorhouse Fair*. After the music is over, the reader will wipe away their tears, allow their hearts a minute to heal, give a grim smile, and turn back to listen to Yellin's song one more time. (September) *Lee Gooden*



**The Trespasser**

**Edra Ziesk**  
Southern Methodist  
University Press, Hardcover  
\$22.50 (274pp)  
978-0-87074-551-5

When Sebastian Bryant arrives at the end of a winding road in the mountains of Kentucky looking for the ideal photograph, Hesketh Day asks him if he has come to “show everybody how sorry it is.” The encounter highlights the tension between rural and urban, local and tourist, which so often characterizes representations of insular Appalachian communities. But

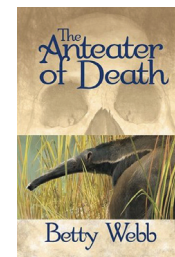
Bryant, who wants to photograph the Pomfrets in front of their mountain cabin, really wants to capture the beauty, stillness, and humanity of the remote locale.

Although Bryant is deterred from taking his photograph, his project is taken up by the novelist, whose beautifully rendered images of the region merge with the human portrayals of a tiny community of people who are all in different ways in love with and stuck on the isolated mountain. Stripped of its coal and lumber, the mountain is both beautiful and sinister: “hollowed out, its solidity gone, held up by nothing but ribby stalactites, its meat picked out so it looked, now, like a carcass with its rib cage bones sucked clean.” Upon the backdrop of this skeletal mountain, Edra Ziesk casts the lives of Hesketh Day, who suffers from dementia and moves psychologically between childhood and the present, Mattie Wheeler, who patiently waits for her life to really begin, and Cass and Sylvie Pomfret, who have a resilient capacity for survival, despite the fact that steady work is simply nonexistent.

Ziesk is also the author of *Acceptable Losses*, *A Cold Spring*, and many short stories. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts. *The Trespasser*, her third novel, explores what that word means in a place where nobody locks their front doors and where property ownership has already been rendered meaningless by the coal and lumber companies that have picked the mountain clean. Hesketh and Mattie are continually on guard, fervently defending their property against photographers, neighbors, and even raccoons. But they trespass in the moral sense evoked in the Lord's Prayer, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” committing countless sins in their desperation to preserve what they believe is theirs.

Ziesk's novel moves seamlessly between the different lives brought together by their shared space, making the reader the ultimate intruder. In doing so, she evokes great sympathy for her characters—trespassed and trespassing alike. (November) *Keya Kraft*

**MYSTERY**



**The Anteater of  
Death**

**Betty Webb**  
Poisoned Pen, Hardcover  
\$24.95 (270pp)  
978-1-59058-560-3;  
Softcover (large print)  
\$22.95 (320pp)  
978-1-59058-561-0

Death stalks the local zoo, but it is not in the form of a ferocious lion, tiger, or bear. No, the culprit is the most dangerous and cunning animal of all, a murderer with a cryptic motive.